

**Philip Soucy tintypes and negatives collection  
MCC-00457**

**Finding Aid**

**Prepared by  
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Fort Kent, Maine**

**Title:** Philip Soucy tintypes and negatives collection

**Creator/Collector:** Philip Soucy

**Collection number:** MCC-00457

Shelf list number: UM-457

**Dates:** 1850-1872

**Extent:** 1 folder (.05 cubic feet)

**Provenance:** Material was acquired from Lise Pelletier donated by Philip Soucy.

**Language:** English

**Conservation notes:** All images and negatives were inserted in clear archival sheets and placed in an archival folder.

**Access restrictions:** No restrictions on access.

**Physical restrictions:** None.

**Technical restrictions:** None.

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**Citation:** Philip Soucy tintypes and negatives collection, MCC-00457, Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes, University of Maine at Fort Kent

**Separated materials:** Not applicable.

**Related materials:** Not applicable.

**Location of originals:** Not applicable.

**Location of copies:** Not applicable.

**Published in:** Not applicable.

**Historical information: Ferrotypes** also known as tintypes first appeared in America in the 1850s, but didn't become popular in Britain until the 1870s. They were still being made by while-you-wait street photographers as late as the 1950s. The ferrotype process was a variation of the collodion positive, and used a similar process to wet plate photography. A very underexposed negative image was produced on a thin iron plate. It was blackened by painting, lacquering or enameling, and coated with a collodion photographic emulsion. The dark

background gave the resulting image the appearance of a positive. Unlike collodion positives, ferrotypes did not need mounting in a case to produce a positive image.

The ability to utilize a very under exposed image meant that a photographer could prepare, expose, develop, and varnish a ferrotype plate in just a few minutes. This, along with the resilience and cheapness of the medium (iron, rather than glass), meant that ferrotypes soon replaced collodion positives as the favorite ‘instant’ process used by itinerant photographers.

The ferrotype process was described in 1853 by Adolphe-Alexandre Martin, but it was first patented in 1857 by Hamilton Smith in America, and by William Kloen and Daniel Jones in England. William and Peter Neff manufactured the iron used for the plates, which they called ‘melainotype plates’. A rival manufacturer, Victor Griswold, made a similar product and called them ‘ferrotype plates’. The term ‘ferrotype’ was in common use, but the public tended to prefer the less formal ‘tintype’, implying the cheap, tinny feeling of the material.

Ferrotypes were made using a thin sheet of iron coated with black enamel and can be identified using a magnet. Because they are not produced from a negative, the images are reversed (as in a mirror). They are a very dark grey-black and the image quality is often poor. Ferrotypes were sometimes put into cheap papier-mâché cases or cardboard mounts, but today they are frequently found loose. Most ferrotypes are fairly small, about 2×3 inches. Because they are made on thin sheets of iron, ferrotypes often show evidence of rust spots or blisters on the surface where the enamel has started to lift off. <sup>1</sup>

***Historical information:*** A **carte de visite** is a photograph mounted on a piece of card the size of a formal visiting card—hence the name. The format was patented by the French photographer Andre Adolphe Eugene Disdéri (1819–1889) in 1854.

Cartes de visite was introduced to England in 1857. People began to collect portraits of their family, friends and celebrities and mounting them in photograph albums. Celebrity cartes were sold at stationer’s shops in the same way that picture postcards are today. The craze for collecting celebrity cartes de visite in albums reached its peak during the 1860s, but the format remained popular until the beginning of the 20th century, and cartes can still be found in large numbers, loose or in family albums.

Because they were popular for so long, it can sometimes be difficult to date cartes de visite. The subject’s clothing and the photographer’s name and address, often printed on the back, can be very helpful, but changes in the cardboard mount can also assist with dating. Cartes were small paper prints—about 3.5 x 2 inches pasted onto standard sized cardboard mounts, about 4 x 2.5 inches. This size remained unchanged throughout the carte’s history. The relative thickness of the cardboard mount can indicate a rough date. Generally, the thinner the mount, the earlier the photograph. The shape of the cardboard mount can also help with dating. Early cartes produced in the 1860s usually have square corners. In the 1870s, mounts with rounded corners were introduced. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://blog.scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk/find-out-when-a-photo-was-taken-identify-ferrotype-tintype/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://blog.scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk/find-out-when-a-photo-was-taken-identify-a-carte-de-visite/>

**Biographical information:** Philip Soucy is the son of Alfred Soucy and Laura Ouellette.

**Scope and content:** This collection consists of five negatives, four ferrotype/tintypes, one photograph called *carte de visite*, and 18 photocopy sheets of the negatives. These tintypes and negatives are of the Soucy family. The dates, from 1850 to 1872, and names of the people are written on a piece of tape on the back of the tintypes. The dates written on the back are inconsistent with dates that have been researched. The five negatives, tintypes, and the *carte de visite* are of Olivier Soucy, Edith Soucy, Denis Soucy, Mr. & Mrs. Vital Dionne, Mary Soucy Langlais.

**Inventory:**

Photo 1 & negative 1:

Olivier Soucy with daughter Edith in 1850. Olivier is the father of Denis Soucy.

**Notes:** Edith was born February 7, 1868, as per St-Basile parish record. She looks 3 or 4 years old on the tintype so the date on the tintype might be around 1872 instead of 1850. Ferrotype/tintype. B & W. 6.4cm x 8.9cm.

Photo 2 & negative 2:

Mr. & Mrs Vital Dionne who adopted Denis Soucy in 1852. **Notes:** Denis was born in 1869 in St-Basile, N. B., as per parish record. The tintype reflects Denis' age at around 5 or 6 years old. This picture was probably taken circa 1874 instead of 1852.

Ferrotype/tintype. B & W. 6.3cm x 9.4cm.

Photo 3 & negative 3:

Marie Soucy Langlais, 1864. **Notes:** Marie is Edith who was born in 1868. The date handwritten on the tintype is undoubtedly incorrect. Ferrotype/tintype. B & W. 3.9 x 5.4cm

Photo 4 and negative:

Denis Soucy in 1866. **Note:** Denis was born in 1869 so the date handwritten on the tintype is undoubtedly incorrect. Ferrotype/tintype. B & W. 5.3cm x 8cm

Photo 5 & negative 5:

Olivier Soucy, 1872. "Carte de visite" (photograph mounted on cardboard with rounded corners). **Notes:** The handwritten date of 1872 on the photograph is undoubtedly incorrect. B&W. 6.1cm x 9.3cm